

# Oral History

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## Richard A. Kuehner

## Jerry Grover

Name: Dick Kuehner

Date of Interview: Febr Location of Interview: Capta Interviewer: Jerry

February 2, 2016 Captain Cook, Hawaii Jerry and Judy Grover

**Years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:** 22 years - 1978 – 2000

**Federal Service** - 34 years including BLM & U.S. Forest Service .

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:

GS-12, Recreation Planner; Portland, Oregon GS-13, Public Use Specialist; Portland, Oregon

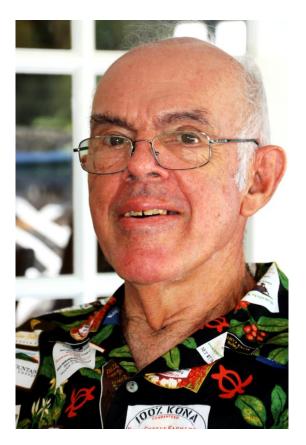
Most Important Projects: Working on interpretative signage and various visitor's centers for refuges and hatcheries

**Colleagues and Mentors**: Ed Murczek, Dick Myshak, Larry Debates, John Doebel, Bob Fields

**Most Important Issues:** Finding funds for projects, drawing the public onto a refuge or hatchery and gaining their support, gaining public access to refuges

Brief Summary of Interview: After obtaining degrees from Humboldt State and Michigan Universities, Mr. Kuehner returned to Humboldt State 1966 to teach courses in Environmental Design and Dendrology. After 5 years, he joined the ranks of the Bureau of Land Management as a landscape architecture, also doing some specialized work for the U.S. Forest Service on Bristlecone Pine. By the time he went to work for the Fish & Wildlife Service in 1978, Mr. Kuehner was a full level professional in landscape architecture, social survey research, and natural resource interpretation. Under his leadership, he developed an intensive program of interpretative signage for refuges. Challenged by the lack of funding, he sought innovative ways of locating available funds to keep the

program moving. His successes led to instructional workshops in other Regions. As a Public Use Specialist, his efforts in design led to construction of visitor centers throughout the region on National Wildlife Refuges and National Fish Hatcheries. His leadership effort in developing individual informative leaflets for each station changed the whole Regional approach to public use interpretation and access on Service lands. He continues his interpretative work in retirement in Hawai'i assisting Refuge and National Park projects.



Richard Kuehner, February 2016, Captain Cook, Hawai'i

#### THE INTERVIEW

Jerry: This is Jerry Grover, a retired Ecological Services & Fishery supervisor in the Portland Regional Office and representing the *Association of Retired Fish & Wildlife Service Employees* and a member of the Service's *Heritage Committee*. I am at the home of Richard Kuehner in Captain Cook, Hawaii to do an oral history on his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The purpose of this interview is part of a program to preserve the history, heritage and culture of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) through the eyes of its employees. Joining us today is Dick's wife Barbara and my wife Judy, also a FWS career retiree.

Would you please state your full name, when, where you were born for the record

**Dick**: Good morning. Well, my formal name is Richard Andrew Kuehner, and I was born in southern California, San Diego, in 1940.

**Judy:** That was a good year.

**Dick**: It was a good year, is that your year, too?

**Judy:** Yeah, and southern California.

Dick: And southern California, yeah.

**Jerry**: Dick, what got you interested in pursuing the career that you pursued with the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Dick: Well, let's see, I was working for Bureau of Land Management and I'd done some work as an interpreter and outdoor recreation specialist designing visitor's centers and things for them. And then finally I got out of that job and into another job, mostly just to get a grade increase and that was to direct and write environmental impact statements. And I spent quite a bit of time doing one on the nuclear power plant and their transmission lines to San Diego from the Colorado River, and that wasn't all that fun. And all of a sudden I saw this job come up with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and it was for the regional office to promote and design, and to develop public facilities on national wildlife refuges and national

fish hatcheries, so that sounded pretty good. And so we went for it and moved to Portland and ironically, that's where Barbara was from originally and so we were kind of back to her old haunts, not mine; it was a little too cool for me, that's why we're out here in Hawaii, but spent 20 years there with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Jerry**: What was your title and grade when you retired and what year was that?

**Dick**: Well, let's see, it was the year 2000 when I retired. I was the Branch Chief of the Public Use Division in Refuges.

Barbara: Yes, 2000.

**Dick**: 2000, and I was a GS 13 Public Use Specialist in charge of public use programs for refuges and fish hatcheries.

**Jerry**: Is that in the Division of Realty or was that just in refuges?

**Dick**: Just in refuges, but it included work for the National Fish Hatchery System plus other special assignments and teaching throughout the country.

**Barbara:** Can I add something here.

Jerry: Sure, go ahead.

**Barbara:** Originally, he taught environmental design at Humboldt State College and his background was really in design, architecture, and that kind of thing. So that's why the job in Portland, he was getting back to something that was really important to him; that's how he stood the clouds for all those years.

**Dick**: That's true, actually. I'm still doing design things for the National Park up here, well, on a volunteer basis. So I've been doing that for a long, long time, and enjoy it.

**Jerry**: Okay, what were you hired at in Portland?

**Dick**: I was a recreation planner, GS-12. When I got promoted to Branch Chief, that was a GS-13

**Jerry**: So you had the years in with the BLM and then you actually transferred over to Fish and Wildlife.

**Dick**: Right, right. And I had worked with Forest Service too up in Bristlecone Pine Forest in California. I remember I did some other research for them on interpretative trails and that sort of thing in California.

**Jerry**: So you weren't a young kid out of school?

Dick: Well not too young, but yeah.

**Jerry**: Where did you go to school, Dick?

Dick: Well, undergraduate at Humboldt State in California and graduate for master's at University of Michigan. Barbara and I met at the University of Michigan, and that was also under the forestry program, forest recreation. But it was really a hybrid between forest, landscape architecture and social survey research. At that point I didn't know whether I was going to go into more academic stuff or not, and I did actually stay in academia for a while, went back to Humboldt and taught for four or five years before I went on to the BLM.

Jerry: What years were those that you were teaching there?

**Barbara:** '66 through '71 or something like that. Yes

Dick: Right, yeah. It was a good place, it was an interesting place; I enjoyed teaching. I taught some courses that were for all of the different resource fields that could be for fisheries or wildlife or natural resources. I taught dendrology and I taught environmental design, which was basically an introduction to landscape architecture for people that were in the resources. And photogrammetry, a number of things that they don't even teach anymore.

Jerry: What was your first job when you got to Portland, can you recall?

Dick: Oh gosh!

**Jerry**: That's a long time back?

**Dick**: Yeah, yeah; first assignment basically.

Jerry: What year was that you came to Portland when

you finally pulled the plug?

**Barbara:** '78 I think; it was during the oil embargo, I remember that. It was a horrible time to be moving.

**Dick**: I think it was about then, about '78.

Barbara: Yeah, Heather was born in '73 and she was five, so I think that was it, '78.

**Jerry**: So you arrived in Portland about '78?

**Dick**: Yeah, the first thing I guess I got involved in there was trying to figure out what the Fish and Wildlife Service was wanting to do for the public, if anything, and that varied a lot as to who you talked to in the Service. A lot of refuges, mostly I worked with refuges but I also worked with fish hatcheries. The refuges people primarily were biologists and had very little background in dealing with the public and serving the public, and had no budget for serving the public. In fact, they would rather at the time, I think, wanted the public to go away and then they could get their work done. And so a lot of my effort was to try to convince some of the refuges, and to some extent the fish hatcheries on Public use. But somehow or other, the fish hatcheries seemed to be fine with the public; they seemed to be happier with having the public around. It was perhaps a more controlled situation and they could get the public to come and watch, keep an eye them or whatever.

But I found that early on, I guess some of those early on things, some of the refuges said, "Maybe we should have something or a sign that says 'Welcome' to the public." "Yeah, yeah, that would be good, and maybe you ought to tell them a little bit about the refuge, tell them what it does," because they hadn't done that; never occurred to them. And then when we finally put in little kiosks and interpretive signs and kind of "Welcome" and "Come on" and here's some of the things you can do rather than all the things you can't, on a sign, which was common, or more common back then. The public would come to the manager and say, "Thank you so much for putting that stuff in; that was interesting." "Oh yeah, been meaning to do it all the time, just never got around to it," was the Refuge Managers answer.

Yeah, right, okay. So basically, I saw that as our function to help the refuge manager plan the facilities and the programs for the public because they needed that support base, they needed the public to support what they were doing and have some kind of an idea of what that was. And so that's what I got into first. It was slow at first because we had to find money to do that. And a lot of times, well, I figured out; I had enough courses in budgeting in BLM and buying things and contracting and all that. So I found out that often times at the end of the year, there were various refuges that didn't spend what they said they were going to spend and the money was going to have to go back. Well, it occurred to me that if you had the plan and a contract ready to go, if that money came back I could divert into one of these projects that we already defined; kiosk, or a tour road, or a tree house, or whatever that might be, a visitor center. And so we did, and really the whole program was started, not as a main line program but something that utilized some of the money for gains that served the public a little bit better.

**Jerry**: Interesting; that's a good beginning. Who's your boss at that time, who signed your performance? Was that Larry?

Dick: Well, it was Ed Murczek.

**Jerry**: And who was the Regional Director at that time, do you recall?

**Dick**: Myshak. Dick Myshak. And Larry Debates was ARD in Refuges.

Jerry: Okay, so that was quite a crew there.

**Dick**: I worked with John Doebel, quite a bit, he was very helpful in getting funding for things.

**Jerry**: So, on these projects, what were some of the normal ones that said you were finally able to divert money and get some things; are there some that stand out that was really a breakthrough?

**Dick**: Yes, I guess one of the first was down at Finley Refuge; that one had nothing for the public at all.

**Jerry**: And that's that main Willamette Valley Refuge?

**Dick**: Yeah. And that one got started and I can't think of the name of the manager now; times goes on. Anyway, he got all excited about serving the public after we got that going, and he turned away and he found he got a lot of support from the local community. It was a simple thing and not very expensive, and that was the case with most of these projects; they weren't all that expensive, you know, there were some signs interpreted, exhibits and that sort of Plus also the refuge leaflets, the general leaflets that describe the refuge; they had little sheets that were one-paged mimeographed; they were pretty sad when they were trying to compete with full-color Park Service brochures and that sort of thing. So there was one time when I talked to, well, sold the idea for the whole Service actually, to have a leaflet for every refuge and in full color.

**Jerry**: Were they individual or did they want one size fits all?

**Dick**: Well, they sort of wanted one size fits all, but part of the idea of a leaflet, what was special about that particular place and you wanted to highlight that, each refuge or each hatchery; what did you want to focus on? So they had to be a little different, they had to look similar, look like a matching set, but they also featured what the place was about. And we got, actually, we got

some money out of, I can't remember exactly how, but went to a meeting back in D.C. and ended up with a million dollars just to do leaflets throughout the Service.

**Barbara:** Was that the ISTEA or was that something else?

Dick: Well, it could have been.

**Jerry**: What was the question?

**Barbara:** Oh, I just asked if it was the ISTEA money because I know he got money from federal highways to help to fund these things.

Jerry: Oh, okay.

**Dick**: I think it might have been, yeah, I'm pretty sure it was. The federal highways, that was another source of funds, because if your leaflet had a map in it, that's part of federal highways, and so they were willing to fund it. You had to be creative to find funds to make things happen and that did, one way or the other, but you're right.

**Barbara:** I know over the years you built quite a staff of talented people that were doing these things.

**Dick**: Yeah, we had about fifteen people; designers, artists, writers.

**Judy:** Very talented people.

**Dick**: Had a good group, it was a fun group to work with. Now I understand, it's becoming more just common place, it's just part of the system, just more and more, it's just automatic that you get something for visitors and try to cultivate the local people as well as others that collect refuges as it were; go from place to place and know what the whole system's about. So, a lot more support these days, I think, which is good.

**Jerry**: On another note, were you involved with the Lower Snake River Comp Plan at all, the design of those facilities, working with the Corps and the Service?

**Dick**: Not personally, no. We had some people in the group that did; I headed up the group. So, but no, I wasn't personally involved in those just from the administrative prospect.

**Jerry**: But you were on visitor's centers. I have to say, at least from my perspective, one of the things that I saw the Service maturing over the years was with visitor centers where you just had kind of had just a little room or dedicated small space or something like that. Suddenly

when you built a visitor center, you built a full blown real interpretive visitor center. And you were part of that?

Dick: Oh, yes.

**Jerry**: I know that one you designed for Coleman NFH, I thought, was one of the premier ones.

**Dick**: Oh, yeah. I have always wanted something; what you're doing basically when you go to a particular station on a hatchery or a refuge, you're designing not just a thing, you're designing an experience. And when you design a whole refuge or a whole hatchery, you take that visitor, the visitor guides it. You know, did they get lost trying to find the hatchery, were there signs adequate to identify it once they were there, was there something to tell them what they could do rather than all of the things they couldn't do? And then each of those experiences, was it easy to find them, was it fun for them, was it new, was it interesting? So this is the mindset that you had and all my staff the same way, educated to the public interest and excitement so that they would pick up on that and try to really serve the visitors.

So if you're going to do a little visitor's center, it shouldn't be just a little alcove off of the office, it should be something that they remember, it was something nice about that place; it allowed them to see the fish up close, or suggested they come back in the wintertime when the eagles were there, or something, some activity that would be fun for them.

We have a neighbor down here that lives up in the bay area and he likes to go bird watching, he's not a professional at it or anything. So I suggested he go to Sacramento Refuge to take a look, because he lives part-time here and part-time there. And I said, "If you go up there in the wintertime, you come in there at the end of the day and watch all the snow geese come back into the refuge." That's an experience, you just can't describe. You got to be there, you've got to do it, but you've got to know that that exists, so that's something that works everywhere.

**Jerry**: Like Klamath, they have an eagle watch at Klamath Refuge.

**Dick**: That's what I was thinking.

**Jerry**: For the bald eagles, and I mean some of our retirees volunteer. Bob Fields, for one, has gone down there annually for years and kind of led Audubon groups or Audubon-sponsored groups and tours to look at the

large number of eagles on that series of refuges in the Klamath Complex.

**Dick**: That's the famous one and a very nice one. You get up there on this elevated hillside above the refuge and the eagles are roosting up there; it's dead silent, it's just about dawn, and it's colder than heck [chuckling]. But it's beautiful to watch these eagles just sort of float on down to the refuges and take their place on the ice and sit there.

**Jerry**: Looking for that poor duck that ain't going to make it.

**Dick**: Well, you know, they're scavengers, they're not killers like the golden eagle, but they scavenge. They sit there, they can sit there the longest time waiting for that duck to die and then walk over and eat it. But that's a beautiful experience, just something you're not going to get and you're not going to understand unless you've been there.

**Jerry**: There are any number of interagency agreements between the Fish and Wildlife Service, and I'm thinking, like BPA and BIA where we shared refuge or hatchery facilities. Did you work cooperatively with those groups or were you pretty much just Service- oriented?

Dick: It was pretty much Service- oriented although we did do facilities at some airport's exhibits and things of that sort. Going up to Palau, I did one exhibit in Palau, did one in the Honolulu Airport, a big globe and focusing mostly on endangered species. I was out there for quite some time. We did a few of those cooperatively, we did some things cooperatively with states when they had a refuge near a federal refuge, and we'd incorporate stories about the good neighbor type policy to suggest things that they could do, so that was also a good possibility; it worked. But there were so many different places; I mean, over the years, I was working at this for twenty years so we covered quite a few places and all sizes from Desert Refuge from a million plus acres to tiny, little postage stamps like Kīlauea Point on the Island of Kaua'i, and just a whole variety of facilities and fun different ideas.

**Judy:** And now to the visitors that were interpreting from what you put out, I mean, it's just wonderful; that's what they were trying to do is educate the public.

**Barbara:** More recently in Spearfish NFH, South Dakota, a number of years ago when he worked for Fish and Wildlife, he helped design and interpret place. Have you been to Spearfish?

Jerry and Judy: Oh yeah.

**Barbara:** The way the community and the Friends group has really come on board and almost taken over a lot of that, I mean, it's a real focal point for community effort, but it began as Fish and Wildlife.

**Dick**: I was called out on different assignments to other regions that were a bit larger in efforts to do designs for those specifically. And Spearfish and its historic fish hatchery was a fun one, and was an interesting one. They didn't have a place to welcome the visitors and take them across the creek and stuff like that. So we built a little building that was sort of a bridge and pulled them across that way, and identified it. And then they had talked about the fish train, you know going to Yellowstone originally supplying the fish out there.

**Jerry**: Yeah, they've got that fish car in there, and they restored it.

**Dick**: I strongly urged them to do that, to put something in there, get one of those in there because I said you're not going to see that story anywhere else. And they did a nice job, they put it in, restarted nicely.

**Jerry**: Well, that Friends Group out there, as far as fisheries go, is probably one of the strongest friends support groups in the Fish and Wildlife; you talk about active, they put their money where their mouth is and they worked hard.

Dick: I bet.

**Jerry**: And they got the fish car, they searched for it, and got an original, genuine one, not a replica. They found an old fish car somewhere and got that sucker out there in the middle of the creek, got two rail tracks and put a set of rails under it and restored it.

**Barbara:** It's beautiful.

**Jerry**: And then they had a dedication, I think we had a retiree's reunion there about 2000 or so, and they dedicated the fish car.

Dick: Oh, okay.

**Jerry**: And the other feature that they have was as you come into the hatchery, there's kind of a little waterfall and a pond and they have a bronze statue of a guy showing this little girl how to fish. I don't know where that idea came from but I think it's just striking.

**Dick**: I don't think that was one of mine, but it's a good idea.

**Jerry**: But you did the investigating because the other thing that just struck me; I worked literally in the four corners of the United States, my career. But coming to Region 1, what I found was, I thought the supporting groups, the administrative people that were doing the public use, had more of a *can do* attitude, looking for *go* signs rather than putting up *stop* signs. And that was the same thing in personnel, trying to get the right person hired or the right contract for the right vehicle rather than just say, "Well, we can't do that because GSA won't let us."

**Dick**: Right, yeah, there's always a reason why not rather than why. You know, it's just like out here at Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park, helping them with the interpretative exhibits. And I made a number of exhibits and cases in my home shop.

**Jerry**: So which one is this now?

**Dick**: Kaloko-Honokohau National Historic Park. A Historical National Park, it's just right north of the harbor in Kona. If you go in there, you'll find a number of cases, hexagonal cases, exhibits cases, and cases on the wall and they were all built downstairs in my shop.

**Judy:** The retired man, right.

**Dick**: Yeah, so I volunteered them; I guess there's fourteen different exhibit cases for them. But there are the same problem as one of the refuges, you know they had a sign of all the things you couldn't do, follow the rules, you know it's sixty some different rules. I mean who would ever read that much, less follow it. I always wanted to put a label down at the bottom, "Pick five of these to follow." But the public is not the enemy and that's the key. The public, that's what we're doing this for.

**Jerry**: You know in public use, one of the major things that we've had has been our publications, not only to hand out the little leaflets that you find at a refuge or a station, but there's the *Fish and Wildlife News*.

Dick: Sure, right.

**Jerry**: And *Refuge Update*. Are you aware—?

**Barbara:** We get those and we enjoy reading those.

**Jerry**: Do you really?

Barbara: & Dick: Yeah.

**Jerry**: That's good, because you know why? They're going to stop printing that.

**Barbara:** : Oh, that's too bad! Is it going to come online?

**Judy**: Yeah, so everything's going to be on the computer.

**Jerry**: You're going to have to read it on your IPod.

**Barbara:** God, I've got enough stuff to read on my computer. I like it in my hand, but I'm an old person.

**Jerry**: Please understand that the Retiree Association is going to bitch like hell on this.

**Dick**: I hope they do because that will be a shame.

**Jerry**: And there's a certain fellow that's kind of leading the charge too on this, is David Klinger, if you remember him.

Dick: Oh yeah.

**Jerry**: He has a way with words, but we're trying to keep from poking Dan Ashe in the eye, you know, just tell him that was really a dumb decision as far as we're concerned but we're trying to offer him an out so he can put a stay on it; it was just an arbitrary decision, we had no input from anybody.

**Barbara:** Things get lost online, I'm sorry, everybody now says, "Check this web address." And unless you're doing a specific search, you're just not going to see it, so those publications that come out, there's something to be said for having it in your hand and it's there.

**Jerry**: You're preaching to the choir.

**Barbara:** They just thought if you needed any more reinforcement. I mean we all get lost with stuff online.

**Jerry**: You remember *Eddies Magazine*?

**Batbara:** Oh that's the fish; I think we get that one too.

**Jerry**: We used to, for two years now it's been online

**Barbara:** Oh, I didn't know that.

**Jerry**: How many of those editions have you read in the past two years?

**Barbara:** None, I'm sure in my table there I've got some *Eddies Magazines*; I don't usually throw those things

away. Because we were with Fish and Wildlife for so long and we know a lot of those places and when you travel you want to check some of them out.

**Jerry**: Dick, the things in your career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, what are some of the things that you've seen that really, you thought, were changes?

**Dick**: Well, some of the things, I think, like in the *Refuge Update* that we get for the last, what has it been, 15 years since I've been with the Fish and Wildlife Service; time flies. But some of the things in there look pretty promising, you know, they actually define the public use and public service. It's part of a refuge, it is part of a hatchery and they're describing it that way. So that's an improvement because it gets a mind set in the people that are working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that that's what they do, one of the important things that they do, it's not just an extra, if you happen to have some extra money, you throw it in there, but no, it's expectation, it's something that actually happens.

**Jerry**: They had nothing like that when you started?

**Dick**: No, no. Fact is, I think Reagan was President at that time or shortly after, and he had this zero-based budgeting deal. And it was such a deal where in terms of public use and public services, it was below the line, it didn't make the funding, it wasn't part of normal budgeting. But all that took, I felt, was to redefine it. So I rewrote it, wrote the whole basis for that and we made it part of it, so all a sudden, it was legitimate to be doing something for the public. And that was something that I saw that was absolutely necessary, so we did it, we wrote it that way.

That started a little bit of this effort, increased effort to talk to the public. You know, it's always easier to do nothing than to do something, so you have to cultivate the interest in the local refuge managers, if it wasn't there already; certain people were all supportive right from the start, Bob Fields, for instance. He was very supportive of this idea because he was a people kind of person. And so he could see that people were important and he'd jump on it right away, if the Service had an opportunity, just the slightest bit of encouragement to go for something and the help to do the technical aspects of putting together an interpretive story, or exhibit or visitor center or tour or whatever else; he saw how that could work. Sacramento Refuge. Gary Kramer was the manager there for quite a while and he, at first, sort of didn't like the public; have you been to Sacramento Refuge?

Jerry: Oh yes.

Dick: Well, you know the long tree line way up, then there's the refuge headquarters at the end of the tree line at the right. And that was originally what I saw and he said, oh people come into the office and they would interrupt him or they would interrupt somebody. Somebody said, "Well, why not bring them down a different route, don't take them by the refuge headquarters per se, take them in the back door. And turn on your tour route and have a parking lot away from the refuge headquarters and walk them down a little trail and create some marsh right there so they have a feeling for what's happening; little postage stamp start to it, a refuge experience. And then build a building on the back of the refuge headquarters with dioramas and other things." So they went in there, they had special entrance and they could be cut off from bothering people in the refuge, but they'd still get a good experience, and we did that.

**Jerry**: But if they had a need for other business with the refuge, they could still find the office?

**Dick**: Oh yeah, they could ask the question and could get in there, but it wasn't quite as direct and they didn't need to be bothering the refuge manager or whoever if it wasn't an issue that was important to the employees there. But then they had also recreation planners there too to introduce, to talk to people.

**Jerry**: Did they have the Wildlife Drive at that time?

**Dick**: Yeah, well see; that was part of it. The Wildlife Drive, instead of going past the refuge headquarters, it turned off before you got to it. And then there was the parking lot, so the parking lot was specifically for the visitor and had a little interpreter trail and little kiosk and stuff, and that was all part of it and then you go into the back door and so it was all focused on the visitor.

**Jerry**: And that made Gary Kramer happy?

**Dick**: Oh yeah, yeah. And he could see the benefits from it too; he liked that a lot. But it's one of these things, you know sometimes you just have to stand back a little bit and say, "Okay, what are we doing here? What can we do better?" And that's a lot of what I would do when I'd go out to a place, just get them to slow down and say, "Hey, what should we be doing. What is that experience for the visitor that we're creating? What is the sequence of events that make that work?" And we define that, and mostly it's signs, it's simple stuff and it's not expensive, it really isn't when you look at it; it's pretty inexpensive support really.

**Barbara:** It's an educational vessel.

**Dick**: Yeah, it's education.

**Jerry**: So far you've been discussing things that are kind of like retrofitting an existing refuge. Were you involved in the planning when they were looking at acquisition of new lands and how what facilities might be there? I was thinking, probably the San Diego Refuge came on when you were working there.

**Dick**: No, that was after, I think.

**Jerry**: And then you had all the Oregon coastal refuges, too.

**Dick**: Yeah, more involved in several of those.

Barbara: That Tualatin one.

Dick: Tualatin, yeah, I've been involved with it.

**Jerry**: Okay, that was another that came online and their visitor center there.

**Dick**: Yeah, right, it was actually built after we left, but planning—

Barbara: Planning was going with it.

**Jerry**: So you just kind of put your ideas on paper before, as they were acquiring it.

**Dick**: One of the things that I think we should have done earlier is work with acquisition to make sure they buy the right land so they have an access to it. There's a refuge right up here, up the hill, Kona Forest, and it never had anything done with it. Well, they never bought the access to it; it'd been a simple thing.

**Barbara:** And the people who have the access are snotty.

**Dick**: Yeah, they are and they don't want access, they knew darn well what they were doing; they sold the land but they didn't sell the access. And our realty people should have been smarter on that, or we should have helped the realty people think that through.

Now that was a Robert Smith acquisition while he was here, but he was buying, he was looking at it from the biology, he was looking at the forest strictly as a biologist. He was just looking at biological habitat and had no input, I guess, from public use as you suggest. I don't know if he ever asked or anybody ever injected or acquisition should have brought that up.

**Barbara:** Yeah, that was an interesting situation because the people who own the access, they actually wanted to do tours themselves.

Dick: That's true.

**Barbara:** So they weren't eager to part with that, it's a way for them to get visitors; they had a guest house up there.

**Dick**: They were just smarter than the Service.

**Jerry**: Well, see, this rest of the story that you don't get, Richard, is how come we don't end up with access? Was that just a dumb decision by the Service, or here we have now, I haven't heard this story, that the people that sold the land also wanted, they controlled the access and they wanted to do the tours up there. That's the rest of the story.

**Dick**: It is, and we've got to be smarter than that and we've got to have all the proper people in the Service be on top of those things and have a chance to take a look at it and say, "Hey, wait a minute, we forgot something here, folks, let's get this sorted out before we buy something." It's just going to be a headache.

**Judy:** Well, we signed the papers.

**Dick**: Yeah, otherwise it's going to be a headache forever and it's going to be almost impossible to add it. And that's been a long time and nothing's happened. I don't think they done anything at all.

**Jerry**: Regarding your staff, how many folks did you have on staff when you retired?

**Dick**: Oh gosh, let's see, there were as many as fifteen. **Jerry**: You had graphic designers and writers.

**Dick**: Writers and artists, yeah. And then we also used some of the folks from engineering, although we had a landscape architect also. But then they moved into engineering, they wanted them there in engineering.

**Jerry**: Did you service, even though you were in Refuges, I worked with you closely on fish hatcheries.

**Dick**: Yeah, well, I think Ed Murczek had helped hatcheries before I even arrived by buying signs and stuff. He took a way different approach, everything was very mechanical; you had to have one of these signs, and one of these signs and one of those signs and if you did that you were doing fine. It was never analyzing, it was just

creating a better experience for the visitor; it was just one of those rogue type of things.

**Jerry**: That was kind of the attitude of the sign manual, the Service's Sign Manual.

Dick: Yes, it was.

Jerry: Had an entrance sign that said, "Welcome."

**Dick**: Yeah, he was approaching on a lot of it just that way and but never really got involved, well, his background was not design; he didn't have any background in that and so that's what I added to it and my staff added to it too, to get the best people in there to do what really needed to be done.

**Jerry**: Looking back, reflecting, Richard, is there any one thing that you worked on that really stands out that really just kind of pushes your button that was a good stroke of business?

Dick: Oh gosh.

**Jerry**: There's where you can help, Barbara, I mean when he was—

**Dick**: Well. Barbara always thought I was on vacation, because I was going to all these places.

**Barbara:** That's true, he'd be over here in Hawaii and I was working in the hospital and he'd say, "Yeah, tough day today, I've got my shorts on, had a little walk on the beach."

**Dick**: Well, I don't know, gee, just to pick out one.

**Jerry**: Well, pick out a couple of them.

**Dick**: Kilauea Point was an opportunity that they couldn't pass up.

**Jerry**: The light house and all.

**Dick**: There was going to be a number of times that they were going to close it because that was a situation where, gosh, we can't accommodate parking any more people so we're going to have to close it. Never mind thinking about another opportunity bringing a shuttle in there, parking them somewhere else, look at the whole situation and get a can- do attitude to figure out how to make this work because it's just a unique, I mean, where else do you have a refuge where you can put up a sign and say there's the red-footed booby and son of a gun, there it is.

**Barbara:** I have a feeling that your greatest joy was finding money where people said there was none. He would come home and say, "We're making it work, I found money over here, I found money over here." And I think that was your greatest pleasure.

**Dick**: I think that's probably true, you know, you needed money to do business, you know, so you had to find it and nobody else was doing it. So you went for it. Occasionally you run into a manager, "Well sure, we can put a little bit aside, we can do this." But that wasn't the norm; that was unfortunate but it was true. It's like hatcheries, you think about the hatchery at Spring Creek, you know up on the Columbia, I think that's right.

**Jerry**: Yep, you're right, right across from Hood River.

**Dick**: Right across from Hood River, there was a place where you should be able to stand there with your big fish, with Mount Hood in the background and get your picture taken. And so we created that and I assume it was done, that was something—

**Judy:** Yeah, that's still there because when we had our retiree reunion, we visited it.

**Dick**: There you go, so yeah. I came up with that idea but then I had Ken Morris do the design, final design on that.

Okay, just little things like that are kind of fun and where else are you going to see that.

Judy: Well, biologists don't always think of that.

Dick: No, no, no.

Jerry: Well, that is an unique place. You can talk about salmon, you can buy salmon in the store, you can buy salmon in the cans, but for a live experience to come out there beginning Labor Day to see the run of Tulle fall chinook salmon at that hatchery and see the spawning, you can stand there and look through the window and not get water and sperm splattered all over you, and watch and see the eggs being taken from the fish. And that was a Corps of Engineers rebuilt hatchery but it has an awful lot of Fish and Wildlife in it.

**Dick**: No, it's good stuff. And even some places, you think, well maybe they would have more public facilities at urban refuges, but historically that wasn't the case. I think now perhaps that you get an inkling to get doing that right away because I think a lot of refuges come about by support of the public before it was even a refuge. So I think there's some kind of inherent part of the possibility.

But you know San Francisco Bay NWR, there wasn't anything in that and that was real retrofit; we tore a building apart to create a visitor's center and redesigned the whole inside of the building and put it together.

**Jerry**: That turned out to be pretty damn nice facility.

**Dick**: Not too bad. I think it worked. That was a fun one, but they never did much at the other end of the bay; nothing much ever happened at San Pablo refuge. But where you have a big potential visitation, that's where they should be putting the money too, if you have to make a choice; putting an investment in terms of showing a place off, show it to a lot of people, maybe that will carry over to some of the other refuges and get started this whole idea of all the other refuges you might visit because you're advertising that at the same time at one refuge for the other and likewise for fish hatcheries, why not?

**Jerry**: So that's the philosophy that the Service needs to adopt.

**Dick**: Yeah, I think so.

**Jerry**: Were there opportunities that you just couldn't get around that you really felt sorry that you couldn't make something happen, where you just had everybody, everything you did was stop signs; a person that was responsible?

**Dick**: Well, I don't know, of the people that were helpful in terms of getting money, and I think John Doebel was one of the best, because he could see the benefits from this and at the end of the year if there were funds getting turned back, I was the first person he would call, "What do you have that you can...?" And that involved a lot of initiative on the part of our staff, because we have to have contracts all defined. We had to have contractors prequalified so that we could close the contract just by getting the final price; it only took two weeks to close a contract and that was something we had to plan out because when John would call me and say, "What do you have for \$50,000", or "what do you have for \$200,000," or whatever. And I usually had something for him, and it happened, it got going.

And I was working pretty closely with different contractors. So they would speed up bids because they understood what had to happen; they'd have to have a cost in and they knew they had to be competitive because we'd have it down to one or two or three contractors that we prequalified and we'd just get the final price and there you go. Get it down.

That was like Barbara said, you know, that was a lot of what I enjoyed was to make things happen because it's too easy just to sit back because it's work to make it happen. You'd have to do a lot of planning, a lot of design ahead of time, betting on the come basically. It was usually there, and we so many, what 125 national wildlife refuges in our region, and there were some that were impossible, that were headaches, but we had so many others that could happen; I didn't spend a lot of time on the ones that weren't happening.

**Judy:** But your can-do attitude, I think, was the most important because you pushed and made it that.

**Dick**: Yeah, I think that's right. And especially if it was a really important one on my mind and I made it happen.

**Jerry**: Dick, were you involved at all with the formation or the building of the NCTC in Shepherdstown?

**Dick**: Yes, actually got involved; there was a team of people from around the whole United States actually coming in to help conceptualize what should we do, you know they are going to put in a training center. Okay, fine. And one of the things that I remember from that is the Park Service has training centers, other agencies have training centers, but the Fish and Wildlife Service ought to have one training center that's just super. When you go there you have a good place to stay, you've got good food, you've got good facilities, you have everything you need to make it really nice. Rick Lemon was quite involved in that, and he picked up on that idea, I think, and he'd call several times to talk about that, and "What do you mean by," this and that and the other thing, because it is a wonderful facility.

**Jerry**: It is. See Rick is another one of those that had that can-do attitude; from the time I went there, the staff was, "Hey, these folks are here for an experience, you're there to help." And you come across somebody walking the paths and they say, "Can I help you?" Was always the staff question, or rather than, "What are you doing here?"

**Dick**: Do you have a pass, a hall pass? [chuckling] And so yeah, I was involved in a lot of that discussion.

**Jerry**: And the architecture too, the using the field stone?

**Dick**: I didn't get involved in the technical aspects of the design so much as to say it ought to be really unique, it ought to stand out, it ought to be well done.

Judy: And it is.

**Dick**: That sort of thing. And it worked, I think they did a neat job; it's been a while since I've been back there. I went back there a number of years, different training sessions, I taught different public use planning and interruptive planning and all else sorts of things. I enjoyed the teaching too for other employees of the Service, other managers; did a lot of talks throughout the country.

**Jerry**: So this is another feature we haven't discussed about you as teacher here.

Dick: Yeah, that's probably true.

**Jerry**: Who were the groups they were focused, the incoming or the advanced courses?

**Dick**: It was incoming managers, I had courses for interpretive design, interpretive planning; that was the more advanced level of people getting involved. They were already involved and just needed to expand there, and I did that at a number of like the wildlife groups and other conferences outside the Service as well, talked to a number of those. So yeah, it was part of it. Spend too much there, they're going to say, "Wow!" That's what you wanted to say, is "Wow!"

Jerry: Well, that's right.

**Dick**: This organization, it builds pride in being involved in our organization too and that's important.

**Jerry**: But the NCTC has turned out to be that facility, people do say "Wow!"

**Dick**: Well, and I think, different political groups have used it; Presidents have used it.

**Jerry**: Yes, they have.

**Dick**: So that's kind of cool.

**Judy:** And the FBI, they go out there because they can, from what I understood---

**Jerry**: Dick, unless you have something you wish to add I'll end the interview here. I want to thank you very much for taking the time for what I think is a very important part of Service history – what it was really like in the trench's, continuing to do the job despite the politics, ongoing turmoil of reorganizations and the like.

And a big 'thank you' for a very nice lunch.